CONCEPT NOTE: PEER LEARNING FROM LOCAL EXPERIENCES

There are over 10.000 urban spaces of at least 50 thousand residents across the world, and 2805 of these in Africa. An important feature of African urban areas is the **high level of population growth**. Many more Africans now live in urban areas than at any other point in history. **Africa has increased its urban population from 32.6 million people in 1950 to 491.5 million in 2015**[1]. The World Bank predicts that by 2030 Africa will finally be an urban continent, with more than 50% of its population living in cities[2].

While these areas are characterized by high population densities, increased employment opportunities and larger labor forces, **they must also cater for housing, infrastructure, transportation, energy and employment, as well as for basic services such as education and health care**[3]. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed new vulnerabilities in social, infrastructure, and governance systems. African cities were particularly vulnerable, with some experts, including the head of WHO, predicting a catastrophe for the continent[4].

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[1] Metropolis, World Association of Major Metropolises. (2019, noviembre). African Metropolitan Report. https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/african-metropolitan-reoprt.pdf

[2] Kessides, C. (2006) The Urban Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for economic growth and poverty reduction. Washington, DC: World Bank.

[3] Metropolis, World Association of Major Metropolises. (2019, noviembre). African Metropolitan Report. https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/african-metropolitan-reoprt.pdf

[4] Maniga, P. (2021, 23 febrero). African Cities in Times of COVID-19: Resilience against all Odds. Africa Portal. https://www.africaportal.org/publications/african-cities-times-covid-19-resilience-against-all-odds/

Facing this challenge has required new approaches to planning, administrative coordination, funding and service provision[5]. African cities have been able to defy these predictions and have avoided the exponential death and contamination rates observed in other parts of the world[6]. **African policy makers have implemented many digital solutions to fight the COVID-19 pandemic at local, national, regional and continental levels**[7].

The COVID-19 crisis has ripened the context for digitalisation to accelerate Africa's productive transformation and make the continent more resilient to future crises[8]. Digital transformation has gone from being an option to becoming a lifeline for using data, consuming content, and engaging in digital applications by individuals, governments, and businesses, in order to ensure continuity of economic and social activities during periods of social distancing and total lockdowns[9].

To highlight the challenges that African cities face and how they are overcoming them, Metropolis and UCLG-Africa decided to design the launch of a Learning Program on **"Metropolitan Governance in Africa".** Based on a pedagogical content designed by Metropolis, this learning program aims to introduce the metropolitan reality and how metropolitan governance with a gender perspective can be the key to face the challenges and threats that surround our metropolises.

During the session "*Peer Learning From Local Experiences*" city managers of different African cities and metropolises will participate in a **peer review of their local experiences facing the challenges produced by the rapid urban growth and the COVID-19 pandemic, giving a particular mention to the role of digitalisation.**

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[5] Metropolis, World Association of Major Metropolises. (2019, noviembre). African Metropolitan Report. https://www.metropolis.org/sites/default/files/resources/african-metropolitan-reoprt.pdf

[6] Maniga, P. (2021, 23 febrero). African Cities in Times of COVID-19: Resilience against all Odds. Africa Portal. https://www.africaportal.org/publications/african-cities-times-covid-19-resilience-against-all-odds/

[7] AUC/OECD (2021), "Overview: Priorities to make digitalisation work for all in Africa", in Africa's Development Dynamics 2021: Digital Transformation for Quality Jobs, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/7b66a37e-en.

[8] AUC/OECD (2021), "Overview: Priorities to make digitalisation work for all in Africa", in Africa's Development Dynamics 2021: Digital Transformation for Quality Jobs, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/7b66a37e-en.

[9] Maniga, P. (2021, 23 febrero). African Cities in Times of COVID-19: Resilience against all Odds. Africa Portal. https://www.africaportal.org/publications/african-cities-times-covid-19-resilience-against-all-odds/